



The following account of the Wesley Foundation ministry that later became United Campus Ministries was presented by M. Duane Sinn at UCM's 70th Anniversary celebration dinner in April of 2014.

When the Methodist District Superintendent from Terre Haute came to visit me in Denver while I was in Seminary at Iliff School of Theology, I was wearing a coal black beard. I had grown it for the centennial of Nebraska, my home state.

At that time, I was serving as student pastor in a rural community church while commuting back and forth to school. Members of the congregation complimented me on the beard, and my own family liked it, so I kept it.

The last question of my interview with the District Superintendent was “Will you shave the beard?” and my answer was NO.

Three days later, I was called from class to answer a telephone call from the Bishop of Indiana. He said he liked my resume and the District Superintendent's report, but the beard bothered him and he wondered if I would consider shaving it if I was offered the position as campus minister for the Wesleyan Foundation. Again, I said NO.

In April of 1968, I was invited to fly to Indiana and meet with the Board of Directors of the Wesley Foundation, which included several professors. The beard didn't seem to bother them, and I was offered the position, which I accepted.

I moved my family to Terre Haute in June and the first order of business was ordination. As the committee met with me, the beard was still a big concern. Finally, James Jones, president of DePauw, said, “I have checked the beard. No fleas, ticks or lice: ordain him.”

So, I was fresh out of seminary when I came to ISU and served as a Methodist Campus Minister in the lovely building we visited this afternoon [the current UCM building at 321 N. 7th St].

Immediately, I opened a Coffee House on the upper floor called *THE ATTIC*. The stage was open to students or approved local talent on Saturday evenings. Between musical numbers, I took the stage and gave various readings from *BORN FREE*, *THE BIBLE*, and *ARE YOU RUNNING WITH ME JESUS*. We soon had standing room only. At 11:30 *THE ATTIC* closed and we went down to the chapel for worship. It was called a celebration, with singing, clapping and sharing. I always gave a meditation which could be discussed later. At times we put speakers on the porch so that students could sit on the lawn for overflow. We also had a Sunday morning Bible study and adjourned to Centenary United Methodist for worship.

During the week we held sack lunches with guest speakers for discussion of various relevant topics. Wednesday evening we had sex education classes as well as controversial movies with a discussion to follow.

I worked closely with the campus ministers of other denominations such as the, Lutheran, Catholic, Baptist, Episcopal and Christian [Disciples of Christ] churches. Father Harlan of the Episcopal Church and I would

spend one evening a week at Rose Holman for dinner with the students followed by worship and a discussion in the lounge.

During the day, the center became a place for commuting students to hang out, study, socialize, or play Euchre or Ping Pong. We also sponsored the Vietnamese Center. The upstairs was used as a classroom to teach English to Vietnamese Refugees. In the spring we had a day trip to Turkey Run for hiking, canoeing and a picnic. In the fall we held a watermelon feed in the parking lot next door to welcome the students back to school

In the late seventies, several campus ministries closed due to funding problems, so a decision was made to unite and form the United Campus Ministry center.

In later years, the coffee house phase faded out as many more activities were available in the newer, more sophisticated dormitories. I reached the students in other ways such as speaking in the dormitories and serving as a chaperone for several years for the Theater Department's annual Spring Break trip to New York City. In addition, I had a religious radio program on Sunday morning on a local popular rock station. To this day, people approach me to say how much they enjoyed "Angles on Angels With Sinn" and the impression it made on their lives. Since I had major in counseling while in Seminary, I did a lot of counseling. In my 13 years as a campus minister, I officiated at over 500 weddings. I'm still in contact with many former students.

In 1981, I decided it was time to move on. However, I didn't care for the assignment suggested by the Bishop, so I left the Center, but stayed in Terre Haute to assume the position of Executive Director of the Western Indiana Community Action Agency, a job I held for 18 years until I retired in 1998.